CHAPTER 7

Gender

Learning Objectives

- Define sex and gender from an anthropological perspective.
- Explain the diversity of biological sex beyond the male–female binary.
- Describe how gender works as a system of power that includes stratification and ideologies.
- Assess how globalization is reshaping gender roles and stratification in local contexts.

Sarah Rose Huckman, a student at the University of New Hampshire, is a prominent public speaker, a vlogger on YouTube, and an activist for transgender rights. Sarah grew up in the small town of Ossipee, New Hampshire, population 4,372, after being adopted from Cambodia. Assigned male at birth, she understood herself to be female from a young age. In the seventh grade, she came out publicly as transgender. At Kingswood High School, Sarah was a four-sport athlete, competing on the girl's division Nordic ski, winter indoor track, spring track, and cross-country teams. When she first began to compete in high school, the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA), which sets athletic policy for the state's high schools, only permitted transgender students who had undergone gender reassignment surgery to compete on teams consistent

with their gender identity rather than their sex assigned at birth. Doctors have not recommended such surgery for transgender youth. Sarah's parents worked with GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders and the NHIAA to allow individual school districts to make that determination locally. Still, the policy's language potentially allowed other schools to challenge Sarah's eligibility.

For three years, Sarah served on the New Hampshire Legislative Youth Advisory Council and advocated for the passage of New Hampshire House Bill 1319 to explicitly extend New Hampshire's nondiscrimination protections to transgender and gender nonconforming people. In testimony before the New Hampshire House Judiciary Committee, Sarah said, "we all want a future where we are judged on the merits of hard work and being good citizens, and no one is treated differently because of their gender identity. . . . This bill is a critical starting point for acceptance and inclusion in our communities, and will allow me, and so many others, to truly live free in our beloved state!"

In 2018, New Hampshire passed HB 1319. A year later, the state explicitly extended protections for transgender and gender nonconforming students to all public high schools. In 2021, the documentary *Changing the Game* followed the journey of Sarah and two other transgender teen athletes, Mack Beggs and Andraya Yearwood, as they struggled against policies, laws, and angry adults to pursue their dreams of being student athletes.

While some U.S. states, like New Hampshire, explicitly prohibit discrimination against transgender athletes, and other states are silent, legislators in a growing number of states have introduced bills to ban transgender youth from participating in school sports consistent with their gender identity, requiring them instead to compete based on the sex listed on their birth certificates. Such bans have been enacted in Idaho, South Dakota, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Texas, among others.

In contrast, at the U.S. federal level, the Supreme Court ruled in a 6–3 decision on June 15, 2020, that discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation is illegal under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which outlaws discrimination in the workplace on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. Following the Court's reasoning, in June 2021, the U.S. Department of Education stated that the Title IX policies that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in educational institutions that receive federal funds also protect students on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

As anthropologists, how do we analyze these cultural battles about the boundaries of gender identity, whether they are waged over youth sports, bathroom use, workplace discrimination, marriage, or transgender teens' access to gender affirming health care? How do we engage the real-life impacts of these policy debates on the lives of millions of gender nonconforming young people and adults both in the United States and globally?

Questions of gender—that is, the characteristics and identities associated with masculinity and femininity in a particular culture and the ways those characteristics intersect with dynamics of power—are central to the practice of anthropology. Since the pioneering work of Margaret Mead challenged U.S. cultural assumptions about human sexuality and gender roles (see Chapter 3), anthropologists, especially feminist anthropologists, have been at the forefront of attempts to use the tools and analysis of anthropology to analyze the role of gender in crucial contemporary debates, social movements, and political struggles. Over the last fifty years, **gender studies**—the study of how gender identities and expressions are shaped by and affect one's life chances—has become one of the most significant subfields of anthropology. Indeed, anthropologists consider the ways in which gender is constructed to be a central element in every aspect of human culture, including sexuality, health, family, religion, economics, politics, sports, and individual identity formation.

gender studies: The study of how gender identities and expressions are shaped by and affect one's life chances.

As we have seen throughout this book, people create diverse cultures with fluid categories to define complex aspects of the human experience. The same holds true for gender. While binary gender identities and expressions have provided a central framework in the history of gender studies, more recent scholarship has expanded to consider nonbinary, gender nonconforming, gender-fluid, genderqueer, and transgender expressions. Even biological sex is far more fluid and complex than many people realize. As we will see later in this chapter, particularly in our discussion of the experiences of intersex individuals, nature creates diversity, not rigid categories. As globalization transforms gender roles and gender relations on both the local level and a global scale, anthropologists play an essential role in mapping the changing gender terrain of the modern world. In this chapter, we will explore these issues in more detail:

- What is gender?
- Are there more than two sexes?
- How do anthropologists explore the relationship between gender and power?
- How is globalization transforming gender roles and stratification?

By the end of this chapter, you will be better prepared to understand the roles that sex and gender play in the culture around you, including in the classroom, in the family, in the workplace, in places of worship, and at the ballot box. You will also be able to apply anthropological insights into gender issues as they emerge in your own life—insights that will serve you well as a romantic partner, spouse, parent, student, teacher, worker, manager, and community leader in our increasingly global world.

What Is Gender?

» Define sex and gender from an anthropological perspective.

"That's just the way guys are," some women sigh when a man says or does some stereotypical "man" thing. "Women!" a man may exclaim, hands in the air, as if all the other guys in the room know exactly what he means. But what *do* they mean? Is there some essential male or female nature that differentially shapes our personalities, emotions, patterns of personal relationships, career choices, leadership styles, and economic and political engagements?

Distinguishing between Sex and Gender

Much of what we stereotypically consider to be "natural" male or female behavior—driven by biology—might turn out, upon more careful inspection, to be imposed by cultural expectations of how men and women should behave. To help explore the relationship between the biological and cultural aspects of being men and women, anthropologists distinguish between sex and gender. **Sex,** from an anthropological viewpoint, refers to the culturally agreed upon physical differences between male and female human beings, especially the biological differences related to human reproduction. **Gender** is composed of the expectations of thought and behavior that each culture assigns to people of different sexes.

sex: The culturally agreed upon physical differences between male and female, especially biological differences related to human reproduction.

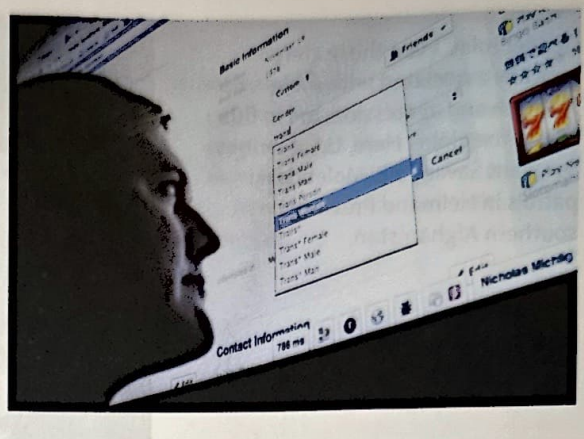
gender: The expectations of thought and behavior that each culture assigns to people of different sexes.

Historically, biological science has tended to create distinct binary mental maps of reality for male and female anatomy. Three primary factors have generally been considered in determining biological sex: (1) genitalia, (2) gonads (testes and ovaries, which produce different hormones), and (3) chromosome patterns (women have two X chromosomes; men have one X and one Y). Within this binary framework, human males and females are said to display **sexual dimorphism**—that is, they differ physically in primary sexual characteristics as well as in secondary sexual characteristics such as breast size, hair distribution, and pitch of voice. Men and women also differ in average weight, height, and strength. An average man is heavier, taller, and stronger than an average woman. Women on average have more long-term physical endurance and live longer.

sexual dimorphism: The phenotypic differences between males and females of the same species.

But sexual dimorphism among humans is far from absolute. In fact, human male and female bodies are much more similar than they are different (Fedigan 1982; Ogden et al. 2004). Many biological characteristics associated with human sexual dimorphism fall along a continuum—a range—in which men and women overlap significantly. Not all men are taller than all women, though many are. Not all women live longer than all men, though most do.

As we will see later in this chapter, primary characteristics of biological sex do not always fit into the two assumed categories of male and female. Millions of people are born with some combination of male and female genitalia, gonads, and chromosomes. This suggests the need to reconceptualize one of our most rigid mental maps of reality—the one separating male and female—in order to more accurately reflect the full range of human physical variation, including many who identify as intersex and those born with ambiguous genitalia.



As the visibility of transgender and nonbinary individuals has increased in the United States, social media companies like Facebook now include an expanded list of possible gender expressions to reflect the expanding cultural definition of gender.

As is the case with sex, in the United States, gender is learned and taught in a mostly binary framework that assumes humans fit naturally into neat categories of male and female, masculine and feminine. As we will see throughout this chapter, cross-cultural anthropological research reveals that a diversity of **gender identities**—each person's internal experience and understanding of their own gender—and **gender expressions**—how a person expresses or presents themselves in relationship to gender, whether in their behavior, appearance, name, or pronouns—undermines a strictly binary approach. Diverse expressions of gender and the wide range of gender nonconforming, gender-fluid, **transgender,** and genderqueer identities stretch far beyond the boundaries of the traditional binary male–female gender system. As we seek to understand and engage gender as a system of power, the term **cisgender** has emerged to draw attention to the unexamined gender norms, roles, identities, and privileges of people whose gender identity and expression correspond with their birth sex, much as attention to Whiteness enables a more complete analysis of race and racism (Valentine 2007; West and Zimmerman 1987, 2009; Darwin 2017).

gender identity: Each person's internal experience and understanding of their own gender.

gender expression: How a person expresses or presents themselves in relationship to gender, whether in their behavior, appearance, name, or pronouns.

transgender: People whose gender identity and expression do not correspond with the biological sex category they were assigned at birth.

cisgender: People whose gender identity and expression correspond with the biological sex category they were assigned at birth.

What is the role of biology in shaping gender identities and behaviors? Research consistently reveals that biology and culture closely intertwine—and even that culture can shape biology. Culture, for instance, constantly shapes and reshapes our bodies throughout our lives, whether through nutrition, exercise, stress, exposure to disease, or social stimulation. Our bodies are designed to respond to our environments and life experiences. Our DNA, for instance, can be turned on and off by environmental factors. Our brains are constantly reshaped by the stimuli they receive. Even our hormone production is closely tied to the experiences we have with others. Testosterone levels rise and fall in response to what is going on around us. Studies have shown that if fathers are actively involved with their children, their bodies respond in ways that help them be good dads (Kuzawa et al. 2009; Muller et al. 2009; Wade and Ferree 2015).

Cross-cultural anthropological research challenges common assumptions that biology determines behavior. Knowing a person's biological sex does not

Gender roles, even those stereotypically associated with male strength and aggression, are in flux across the globe. Here, U.S. Marines Sergeant Savanna E. Malendoski patrols in Helmand Province, southern Afghanistan.

enable us to predict what roles that person will play in a given culture. In some cultures, people with two X chromosomes do most of the cooking, farming, public speaking, and ritual activity; in others, people with one X and one Y chromosome fill those roles. Alternatively, the tasks may be done by both but stratified by power and prestige. In many Western cultures, for instance, both XX and XY cook. But women tend to cook in the home, while men predominate as restaurant chefs. Clearly, this is not a biologically driven division of labor. What could be the cultural reasons?

Even roles stereotypically associated with male strength and aggression do not fit an assumed binary gender division. Women do heavy labor—like women in many parts of the world who rise early to carry water drums miles from the well to their homes. Even the predominance of men in violence and warfare is shifting as militaries in many parts of the world increasingly rely on women soldiers. Because biology cannot predict the roles that men and women play in a given culture, anthropologists consider how gender is constructed culture by culture, and they explore the implications of those constructions for individuals in each context.

The Cultural Construction of Gender

Humans are born with biological sex, but we learn gender. From the moment we're born, we begin to learn culture, including how to walk, talk, eat, dress,

think, practice religion, raise children, respond to violence, and express our emotions in gendered ways (Mauss 1979). We learn what kinds of behavior are perceived as masculine or feminine. Thus, anthropologists refer to the **cultural construction of gender.**

cultural construction of gender: The ways humans learn to perform and recognize behaviors as masculine or feminine within their cultural context.

Family, friends, the media, doctors, educational institutions, religious communities, sports, and law all enculturate us with a sense of gender that becomes normative and seems natural. For example, parents "do gender" with their children. They assign them boy or girl names; dress them in gendered clothing, colors, and jewelry; and give them the "right" haircuts. Parents even speak to their children in gendered tones of voice. As we see gender being performed all around us, we learn to perform it in our turn. In these ways gender is taught, learned, performed, and policed.

Over a lifetime, gender becomes a powerful, and mostly invisible, framework that shapes how we see ourselves and others (Bern 1981, 1983). Our relationships with others become an elaborate gendered dance of playing, dating, mating, parenting, and loving that reinforces our learned ideas of **masculinity** and **femininity** and establishes differing roles and expectations. Gender is a potent cultural system through which we organize our collective lives—not necessarily on the basis of merit or skill but on the constructed categories of what it means to be a man or a woman (Bonvillain 2007; Brettell and Sargent 2009; Lorber 1994; Rubin 1975).

masculinity: The ideas and practices associated with manhood.

femininity: The ideas and practices associated with womanhood.

Teaching Gender in the United States: Boys, Girls, and Youth Sports Sports is a key cultural arena in which individuals learn gender roles. A study of children playing coed T-ball provides insights into how gender in the United States is subtly and not-so-subtly taught, learned, and enforced through youth sports (Landers and Fine 1996). In T-ball, the precursor to baseball and softball, kids hit a ball off a stationary, upright plastic stick (a tee) rather than a ball thrown from a pitcher.

Landers and Fine found that T-ball coaches established a hierarchy of opportunity, training, and encouragement that favored boys over girls. Boys consistently received more playing time than girls, played positions (such as shortstop or first base) that provided more opportunities to touch the ball and develop their skills, and had more opportunities to practice hitting the ball at the plate. Boys frequently received coaching advice, while girls' mistakes went uncorrected. Parents and other players supported this hierarchy of training and opportunity and, along with the coaches, offered less or more encouragement along gender lines. For example, boys received more words of praise for their successes. These hierarchies were apparent not only between boys and girls but within gendered groups as well. Among the boys, praise and opportunity were unequally distributed: Those who were already stronger, faster, better

coordinated, or more advanced in their skills were favored over those who were not as advanced. Moving beyond the T-ball experience, the researchers noted that ideal forms of masculinity and manliness are taught, learned, and enforced on the baseball field as well, promoting aggressiveness, assertiveness, competitiveness, physical strength and skill, and a drive to succeed and win (Landers and Fine 1996).

Did you ever participate in youth sports, either in the United States or in another country? If so, what was your experience like? Did your parents sign you up for certain sports—basketball, soccer, lacrosse, football, wrestling, ice hockey, dance, gymnastics, figure skating, cheerleading? If so, what role might their ideas of gender have played in their choice? How might the gender enculturation process in sports and physical play affect gender nonconforming, genderqueer, or trans kids? In considering Landers and Fine's study, can you see the ramifications of such gender training on individuals' attitudes and behaviors as they become adults with responsible roles in family, work, and politics?

While recognizing the physical differences between men and women—modest as they are when considering the diversity of the whole human population—how do we factor in the role of culture when considering gender differences in sports and athletic performance? Gender enculturation in sports and physical play begins early and happens in varied settings. I remember taking my toddler son to the playground and watching as other parents encouraged their little boys to run, climb, and jump while urging their little girls to play nicely in the sandbox. Starting in everyday settings like this, perhaps we can begin to imagine the cumulative effects of parental expectations, peer pressure, and media images on girls' motivation to engage in intense physical

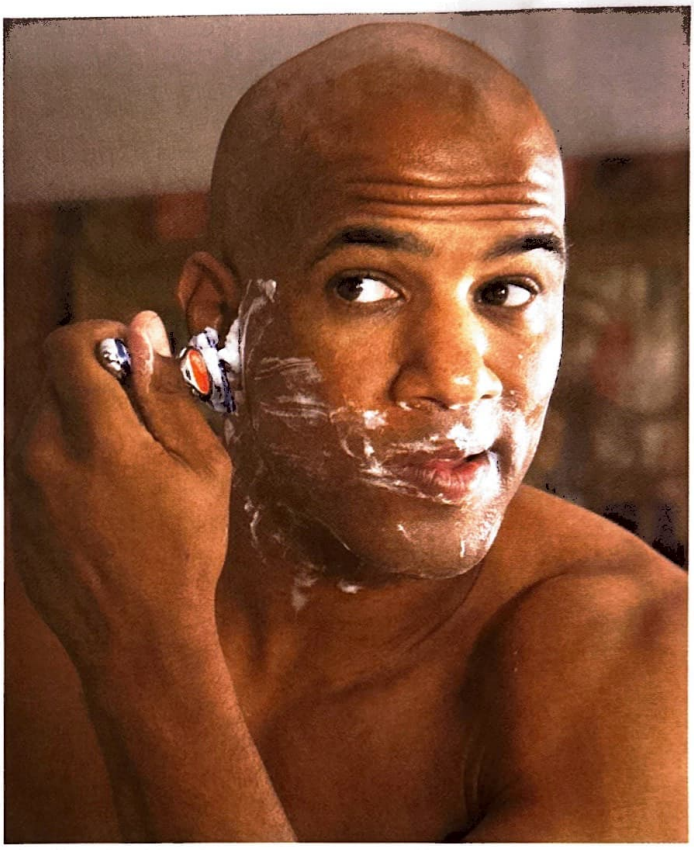
How is gender taught and learned through youth sports, like this T-ball game?

YOUR TURN: FIELDWORK

Nature or Nurture?

Try this exercise, which aims to challenge your assumptions about how biology and culture—sometimes called nature and nurture—interact to shape our gender identities and expressions.

Write down the first things that come to mind in response to this question: If you woke up tomorrow and you were a different sex or gender, how would your life be different? Think about it. Start from the minute you wake up. Trace your morning routine, what you would wear, what you would eat, what you would do in the bathroom, what you would experience at school or the office, what would happen after work. Would suddenly being a different sex or gender change what you could normally do or say or where you could go? Would people respond to you differently? Which differences would be determined by the change in your biology and which ones by cultural expectations of what it means to be a particular gender? Have a discussion with a differently gendered person in the class about your findings. Which of your ideas match your peer's actual experiences? What did you not imagine that your peer had to describe to you?



If you woke up tomorrow and found that you were a different gender, how would your day be different?

activity and competition or boys' willingness to express emotions, play with dolls, or take care of younger siblings. As a result, sports may reflect less about real physical differences in speed, endurance, and strength and more about how a given culture constructs and maintains gender and sex norms. Today, as training and opportunities increase, women are closing the performance gap with men in many sports. The gap between male and female marathon winners, for instance, has rapidly closed to less than ten minutes, and women are improving their times faster than men. But inequality of opportunity along gender lines persists through sports culture, including unequal access to coaching, nutrition,

training facilities, and financing. As a result, definitive comparisons between women and men athletes cannot be made at this time (Wade and Ferree 2015).

Constructing Masculinity in a U.S. High School Since the 1970s, gender studies have focused primarily on women. Recent studies, however, have begun to explore the gender construction of male identity as well as the broader construction of masculinity. The ethnography described here touches on several key aspects of this complex process.

C.J. Pascoe's ethnography *Dude, You're a Fag* (2007) explores the construction of gender—and particularly masculinity—in a suburban, working-class, racially diverse high school in north-central California. Calling someone a fag, what Pascoe calls "fag discourse," occurred almost exclusively among White male students in a daily banter of teasing, bullying, and harassment. Basing her conclusions on interviews with students, Pascoe found that calling someone a fag was not about whether someone was or was not gay; instead, it was directed at guys who danced like girls, cared about their clothing, seemed too emotional, or did something incompetent. In other words, White male students directed the epithet at other males who were not considered sufficiently masculine. Gay guys were tolerated as long as they were not effeminate, as long as they could throw a football around. Among the teenagers in Pascoe's study, fag discourse became a powerful tool for enforcing the boundaries of masculinity—a disciplinary mechanism for making sure "boys are boys" through the implied threat of abuse or violence.

Moreover, Pascoe points out that masculinity is not always associated with men. Girls can act masculine as well. She describes a group of "masculine" girls who play on the girls' basketball team and "perform masculinity" in how they dress, display their sexuality, and dominate public spaces around the school. Jessie, a lesbian, is also homecoming queen and president of the student council. Her popularity appears to be related to her performance of masculinity. In these contexts, masculinity and dominance are linked to women's bodies, not to men's. Pascoe thus points out the ways in which both guys and girls can perform masculinity and how girls can adopt masculinity to gain status (Bridges 2007; Calderwood 2008; Wilkins 2008).

Think for a moment about how you establish and guard your own gender identity. Do your experiences have any similarities to those of the teenagers in Pascoe's study (either the aggressors or the targets)? Have your actions and experiences changed as you moved from high school to college? Have you ever purposely adopted "masculine" or "feminine" attributes to fit in or gain status?

The Performance of Gender

gender performance: The way gender identity is expressed through action.

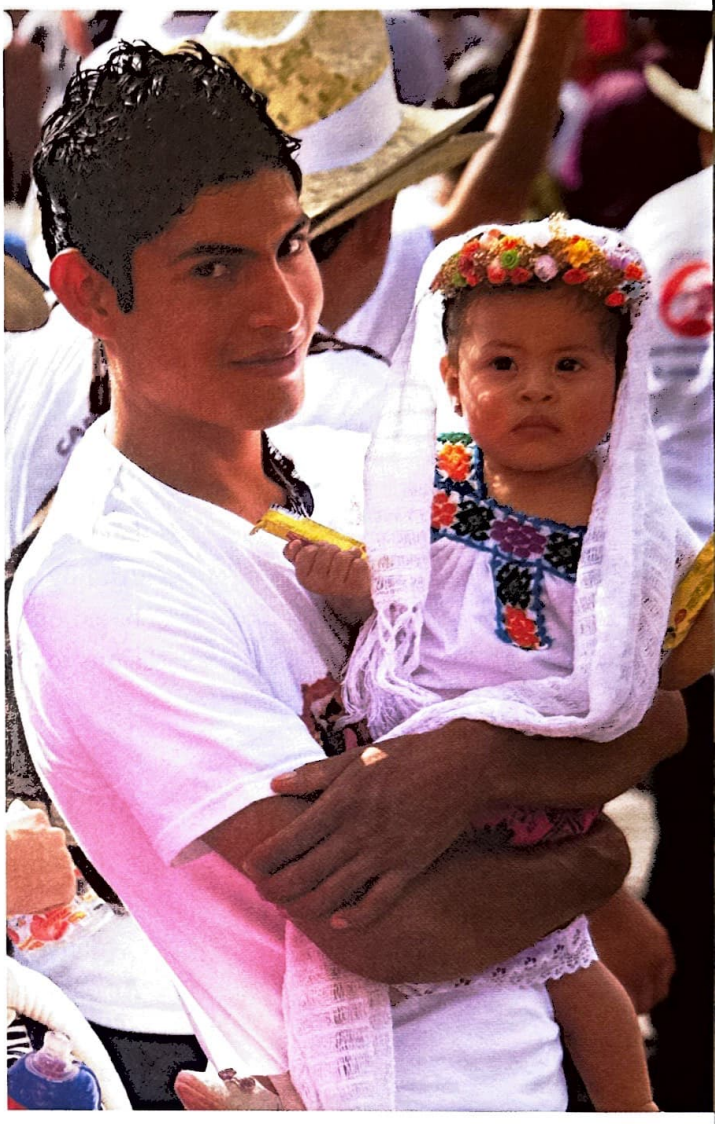
Recently, anthropologists have moved from focusing on gender roles toward examining **gender performance**. Gender roles can mistakenly be seen as

reflecting stable, fixed identities that fall in one of two opposite extremes—male or female. But anthropologists increasingly see gender as a continuum of behavior that ranges between masculine and feminine. Rather than being something fixed in the psyche, gender is an identity that is expressed through action (Butler 1990).

My students, when identifying stereotypical masculine and feminine characteristics, often create something similar to the following list:

- *Masculine*: aggressive, physical, tough, competitive, sports oriented, testosterone driven, strong, unemotional
- *Feminine*: gentle, kind, loving, nurturing, smart, persuasive, talkative, enticing, emotional

But we know that both women and men can display any of these characteristics, and any individual may display various characteristics at different times depending on the setting. A man may perform his masculinity—his gender—differently when watching football with his buddies than when out on a date. Indeed, people regularly make choices—conscious and unconscious—about how they will express their gender identity, for whom, and in what context. This is why we say that gender is performed (Butler 1990; Weston 2001; Valentine 2007).



What does it mean to be macho? Here, a father holds his baby in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Machismo in Mexico The construction of masculinity does not necessarily yield a rigid result, as the following study reveals. In *The Meanings of Macho* (2007), Matthew Gutmann examines what it means to be a man, *ser hombre*, for the men and women of a small neighborhood in Mexico City. Common understandings of *machismo* as the concept has spread around the world feature stereotypes of self-centered, sexist, tough guys. When "macho" is applied to men in Latin America, especially working-class Mexican men, these stereotypes can also include insinuations of violence, drug use, infidelity, and gambling. However, Gutmann's research in a working-class community reveals a complex male world of fathers, husbands, friends, and lovers that does not fit the common stereotypes.

For the men Gutmann studied, machismo and masculinity constitute a shifting landscape. What it means to be a man (or a woman) in the community can depend on the particular man or woman or the particular circumstance. One of Gutmann's key informants, the elderly Don Timo, rails against effeminate men but has himself crossed stereotypical gender boundaries by actively

MAP 7.1
Mexico City

helping to raise his children. Two other informants, Tono and Gabriel, who are tough young men, argue about a father's proper role in buying children's Christmas presents. These examples illustrate the fluidity of male identity in the population that Gutmann studied.

Ultimately, Guttmann discovered such complex male identities that he found it impossible to use any simple formula to describe a typical Mexican man, a Mexican urban working-class man, or a macho Mexican. Instead, the men in the community he studied worked out their roles together with women, debating and deciding about household chores, child rearing, sex, the use of money, work outside the home, and the use of alcohol (Limon 1997; Parker 1999). How do these processes take place in your own family?

Viewing gender as a performance enables us to broaden our thinking beyond easy dichotomies and universal characteristics of "man" and "woman." And by approaching gender this way, we can more easily see that stratification based on gender is not fixed and natural; rather, it emerges as a result of decisions to arrange access to power, privilege, and resources in particular ways.

Are There More Than Two Sexes?

» Explain the diversity of biological sex beyond the male–female binary.

As our earlier discussion of sexual dimorphism indicated, primary characteristics of biological sex do not always fit neatly into the two assumed categories of male and female. In fact, scholars recognize more than two biological sexes, as discussed below. Moreover, even when we can identify a person's biological sex, we cannot predict what gender roles that person will play in a given culture. Subsequently, sex does not always correlate with society's assumptions around gender.

MAP 7.2
South Africa

Case Study: Caster Semenya, Female Athletes, and Gender Stereotypes

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, sports often serve as an arena for debate and contestation over meanings of sex and gender. Caster Semenya (b. 1991) grew up in Ga-Masehlong, a rural South African village of subsistence farmers living in small brick houses and mud huts with little running water or electricity. In August 2009, at age eighteen, Semenya surprised the world by winning the gold medal in the 800-meter race at the track and field world championship sponsored by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) in Berlin, Germany. Within days, however, she was stripped of her medal and prize money. She was barred from international competition and plunged into a worldwide controversy and media frenzy.

South African runner Caster Semenya won a gold medal at the 2009 International Association of Athletics Federations' track and field world championships in Berlin, Germany, silver medals at the 2011 World Championships and the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, and a gold medal at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

What happened? Spurred by rumors promoted by sports blogs in South Africa, the Australian track and field association—whose runners Semenya defeated in Germany—filed charges that she was not a woman. These questions were not new. Despite her birth certificate showing the designation "female"—and the fact that she grew up as a girl and identifies as a woman—her powerful physique, vocal quality, and running prowess had frequently elicited questions from her competitors. According to her coach, Semenya sometimes addressed these challenges through a joint trip to the women's room with a member of the opposing team. But the IAAF's investigation became an international incident. The IAAF subjected Semenya to a series of "gender tests" in which a panel of supposed experts—including a gynecologist, an endocrinologist, and, surprisingly, a psychologist—attempted to determine her sex and her qualifications to run against other women in international competition. But how would they decide if she was a woman?

How would you decide?

Nearly a year later, the IAAF cleared Semenya to compete in international events against women. Her gold medal and prize money were returned to her. The South African government had long since authorized her to compete in South Africa. The IAAF, however, refused to release the results of its inquiry, citing privacy issues. An unverified report of her gender test that was leaked

to the press suggested that Semenya might have a common sex variation—specifically, female external genitalia matched with internal testes. Or perhaps she has a chromosomal variation. Like millions of others, Semenya might be intersex, meaning that biologically she does not fit neatly into the category of male or female (Zirin and Wolf 2010).

Caster Semenya's experience raises important anthropological questions about how we distinguish between biological sexes (male and female) and how we understand gender. Perhaps the uproar around Semenya tells us even more about our cultural ideas of what men and women are supposed to be like—that is, it underscores the cultural construction of gender.

A Theory of Five Sexes

Biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling (1993, 2000) has proposed a theory that sheds light on the issue of fluidity versus rigidity in conceptualizing categories of biological sex and their relationship to gender identity. In her article "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough," Fausto-Sterling describes the middle ground between these two absolute categories. This middle ground encompasses a diversity of physical expressions along the continuum between male and female that are described as **intersex.**

intersex: The state of being born with a combination of male and female genitalia, gonads, and/or chromosomes.

A review of medical data from 1955 to 2000 suggests that "approximately 1.7% of all live births do not conform to [the] ideal of absolute sex chromosome, gonadal, genital and hormonal dimorphism" (Blackless et al. 2000, 151). Using these statistics, we may estimate that millions of people are born with some combination of male and female genitalia, gonads, and chromosomes. Some have a balance of female and male sexual characteristics—for instance, one testis and one ovary. Others have female genitalia but testes rather than ovaries. Still others have male genitalia with ovaries rather than testes.

Most Western societies ignore the existence of middle sexes. More commonly, they legally require a determination of male or female to be made at birth. Furthermore, since the 1960s, Western medicine has taken the extreme steps of attempting to "manage" intersexuality through surgery and hormonal treatments. According to the 2000 American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement on intersex surgery, "the birth of a child with ambiguous genitalia constitutes a social emergency" (American Academy of Pediatrics 2000, 138). Medical procedures—most performed before a child comes of age and can decide for themselves—aim to align intersex infants' sex characteristics with the cultural norm for either males or females, although about 90 percent of the surgeries make ambiguous male anatomy into female. Decisions are often based on the size of the penis: The smaller the phallus, the more likely it is

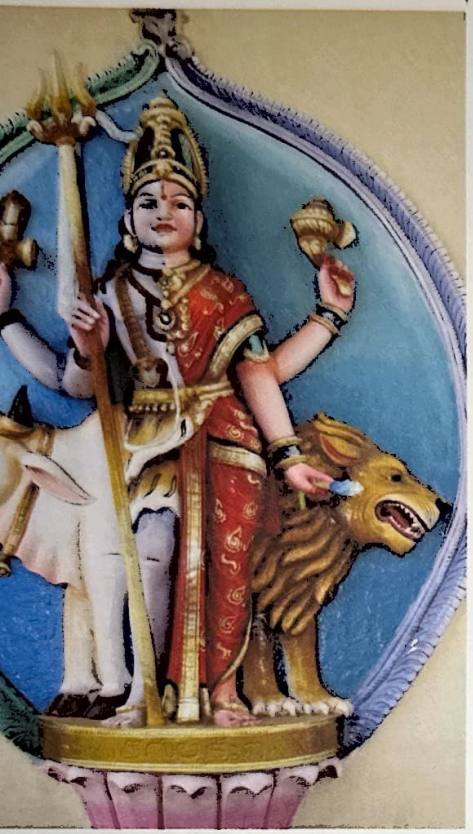
that the surgery will reassign the person as female. These interventions represent what French social scientist Michel Foucault ([1976] 1990) has referred to as *biopower*—the power of the state to regulate the body—in this case through control of biological sex characteristics in order to meet a cultural need for clear distinctions between the sexes.

These medical interventions have faced increasing criticism both within the medical profession and among advocacy and support groups such as the Intersex Society of North America (www.isna.org), InterConnect (https://interconnect.support/), and interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth (https://interactadvocates.org). Such groups have worked to educate the public and the medical community about the experiences of intersex people, particularly about their right to control decisions about their sexual and gender identities. In 2006, *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, published new guidelines that urge practicing greater patient-centered care, avoiding "elective" surgery until the person is old enough to make their own decision, and eliminating misleading and outdated language (such as *hermaphrodite*) that distracts from treating the whole person.

The presence of middle sexes suggests that we must reconceptualize one of our most rigid mental maps of reality—the one separating male and female. In the process, perhaps we will recognize that just as gender is culturally constructed, our ideas of human biology have been culturally constructed as well. Acknowledgment of a diversity of physical expressions along the continuum between male and female may, in turn, allow for a less dualistic and more holistic approach to understanding the complex relationship between biology and gender (Davis 2015).

Alternate Sexes, Alternate Genders

Cross-cultural studies show that while many cultures fix sexuality and gender in only two distinct categories, many others allow room for diversity. Certainly, the gender binary is being contested in U.S. culture as trans experiences are increasingly integrated into mainstream media and popular culture, for instance, via the television shows *Orange is the New Black*, *Transparent*, and *Pose*. In India, even though the country's dominant system for mapping sex and gender strongly emphasizes two opposite but complementary roles (male and female), Indian culture also recognizes many alternative constructions. Hindu religion acknowledges these variations in myth, art, and ritual. Hindu myths feature androgynous and intersex figures, and Hindu art depicts a blending of sexes and genders, including males with wombs, breasts, or pregnant bellies. In terms of Hindu ritual, the following discussion explores the role of one alternative group, known as *hijras*, in expressing gender diversity in India.



Hindu religious myth, art, and ritual acknowledge alternative gender constructions like this depiction of Ardhanari, an androgynous deity composed of Shiva and his consort Parvati.

The Role of *Hijras* in Hindu Ritual *Hijras* are religious followers of the Hindu Mother Goddess Bahuchara Mata, who is often depicted and described as transgender. Most *hijras* are born as men, though some may be intersex. In *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India* (1998) and subsequent writing, Serena Nanda has analyzed these individuals and their role in demonstrating gender diversity.

Through ritual initiation and, for some, extensive ritual surgery to remove their penis and testicles (an operation now outlawed in India), *hijras* become an alternative sex and gender. Culturally, they are viewed as neither man nor woman, although they tend to adopt many characteristics of the woman's role. Because of their transgression of cultural and religious boundaries, they are at once feared and revered. Many live in *hijra* religious communities on the margins of Hindu society. *Hijras* often face extreme discrimination in employment, housing, health, and education. Many support themselves through begging, ritual performances, and sex work. Violence against them is not uncommon, particularly against *hijra* sex workers.

At the same time, *hijras* are revered as auspicious and powerful ritual figures. They perform at weddings and at birth celebrations—particularly at the birth of a son. They not only bless the child and family but also entertain the celebrants and guests with burlesque and sexually suggestive songs, dance, and comedy. Their life in the middle ground between strong cultural norms of male and female contributes to their ritual power (Nanda 1998; Saria 2021). These insights underscore the potential for more complex understandings of sex and gender that move beyond assumptions of two discrete categories of male and female, masculine and feminine.

Two-Spirits in Native North American Cultures According to accounts written over the past 100 years, many Native North American cultures have had traditions of gender diversity. Such traditions have supported a gender alternative now commonly referred to as Two-Spirits (Roscoe 1991; Williams 1992). Some of these transgender men and women adopted roles and behaviors of the opposite gender. In certain cases, people considered them to have both feminine and masculine spirits. Often, they were considered to have supernatural powers and thus held special privileges in the community.

Since 1990, the term *Two-Spirits*, a direct borrowing from the Ojibwe language, has risen in popular and scholarly usage after being proposed by participants of the third annual Native American/First Nations Gay and Lesbian Conference in Winnipeg, Canada. No common term exists across Native cultures for alternative gender patterns, nor are the historical or contemporary practices indicated by these terms by any means uniform. Instead, many different terms have served to represent local expressions of alternative gender

Steven Barrios (*left*), a leader of the Montana Two Spirit Society, works to eliminate homophobia among Native Americans. Laverne Cox (*right*), a popular actress, works to advocate for trans rights.

and sexuality among Native Americans—for example, *winkte* (Lakota), *kwido* (Tewa), and *nadleeh* (Navajo; Jacobs 1997).

Current studies of sex and gender diversity in contemporary Native American communities attempt to de-romanticize the accounts offered by earlier anthropologists, historians, and other social scientists of a tolerant Native American life for those who were not heterosexual. These idealized views do not match the experiences of many gay, lesbian, transgender, or Two-Spirit Native Americans today who have experienced homophobia or transphobia rather than acceptance both within and beyond their Native American communities (Jacobs 1997).

How Do Anthropologists Explore the Relationship between Gender and Power?

» Describe how gender works as a system of power that includes stratification and ideologies.

Although gender is often regarded as affecting individuals on a personal basis—for instance, how you negotiate relationships with people you date, study with, or work for—anthropology illuminates how gender structures relationships of power that have far-reaching effects. Understanding these processes becomes increasingly important as individuals and cultures experience heightened interaction in today's global age (Mascia-Lees 2009).

Boundaries of Gender and Sexuality at the Canadian Border

In his book *Real Queer? Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Refugees in the Canadian Refugee Apparatus* (2015), York University anthropologist David Murray explores the Canadian government's high-stakes process for assessing asylum claims based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). Claimants face a daunting double challenge. They must first prove their identity. Then they must prove that they faced persecution in their countries of origin. The Canadian government has welcomed lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender refugees for more than twenty years, and it has more recently expanded its framework to include gender identity and gender expression. Still, many applicants are turned down. Through intensive ethnographic fieldwork with asylum seekers, court officers, and a number of well-established LGBTQ and immigrant social service agencies and support groups in Toronto, Murray examines the complex process through which SOGIESC refugee claimants navigate the Canadian refugee apparatus, establish a credible story line, and convince the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) that they are, as Murray frames it, "real" queer.

Murray's book focuses on arrivals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Eastern Europe who petition for refugee status after crossing the border into Canada. Their expressions of gender and sexuality vary widely across cultures, defying easy international definition and creating inconsistencies in an adjudication system heavily informed by normative Western notions of gender and sexuality. In this context, refugee claimants deploy a wide array of creative strategies to learn about and prepare for their immigration hearings. Many join refugee support groups to gather information, make friends, and find safe spaces in an unfamiliar country. They seek out the advice of social workers, lawyers, and fellow refugees. Most volunteer with an LGBTQ, HIV/AIDS-focused, or other community organization while they await their hearing in the hope of receiving a reference letter from the group that can be used to help establish their credibility. But Toronto's nonprofits have a complicated, if carefully cultivated, role in this arena. They do serve as advocates and frequently write letters of support for many volunteers, which can serve as key pieces of evidence in their cases. But Murray criticizes the groups for engaging in a kind of surveillance for the state, effectively becoming informal screeners for the Canadian IRB of a claimant's legitimacy.

Activist Sarah Hegazi sought asylum in Canada after abusive engagements with law enforcement when Egypt was criminalizing any public support of LGBTQ rights. Though she ultimately took her life, people in Naples, Italy, organized a flash mob to honor her.

In most cases, the asylum seeker's case depends heavily on their personal narrative. Credible documents

proving repressive conditions in their home countries may be partial or completely unavailable, so how they present themselves in formal hearings often determines the outcome. Lawyers, LGBTQ support workers, and nonprofit staff may help SOGIESC applicants understand the process and structure of the hearings. They may also help them tell their stories in ways that will appear to the court to be credible and authentic. Convincing stories are best told in the right order and with the necessary components. Over time, successful claimants learn to present themselves in ways that conform to preconceptions of an authentic SOGIESC refugee in the eyes of refugee workers, other refugees, and decision makers. Murray notes the particular importance of aligning these stories with the dominant Canadian national narrative. If Canadians, and most importantly, the personnel of the Canadian IRB, view refugees' home countries as backward, homophobic, and repressive, while Canada stands out as an international safe haven where all are welcome, then refugee claimants must credibly align their stories within that narrative. This can be particularly challenging for claimants who have fond memories of home, despite having to flee, and those who have experienced homophobia and racism in Canada after arrival.

Murray reflects on the particular difficulties that SOGIESC refugees have telling compelling and authentic narratives. Their stories frequently involve intimate, emotional narratives about desires, identities, practices, experiences, and journeys that are extremely private, frequently violent, and often previously unspoken or even unspeakable. How does a refugee claimant learn to present these intimate details successfully and credibly in the formalized, legalistic environment of the Canadian IRB? At times, some SOGIESC individuals, especially those with more fluid gender identities, may choose to present an identity and a narrative that is not authentic in order to avoid speaking about some details of their lives or in order to align their stories with IRB expectations and formal guidance on who is "real" queer and who is not. By exploring the experiences of refugee claimants crossing this highly regulated nation-state border, Murray, whose book has since contributed to a rethinking of Canadian refugee guidelines, sheds light on the unique challenges of translating gender identities and experiences, concepts of biological sex, and expressions of sexuality across cultures and countries. For a look at one anthropologist's efforts to address the rights of LGBTI people in Malawi, see "Anthropologists Engage the World" on Cal Biruk .

Revisiting Early Research on Male Dominance

A quick look at some statistics reveals the current contours of women's struggles worldwide: Sixty percent of the world's poorest people are women and girls. More than half of all children unable to attend school are girls. The chance

Cal Biruk

Anthropology in Global Health Worlds

Professor Cal Biruk traces their roots as a medical anthropologist to their hometown of Toms River on the New Jersey shore. "The town I grew up in is known for having a childhood cancer cluster. My dad worked at the chemical dye plant that created the toxic plumes of what is now one of the major Superfund cleanup sites in the United States. The plant was the largest employer of working-class men in the town, so my dad and his friends were hesitant to believe what was going on. As a kid I witnessed all the illnesses and the politics around that."

"A medical anthropology course in college helped me unravel the complexities of what I saw growing up. I learned not only about different traditions of healing around the world but I also learned about different conceptualizations of health that centered not just on our individual physical bodies but also on the ways health is shaped by politics and culture and embedded in social relations. That helped me understand the health experience both of my family and my hometown and it has shaped my research going forward."

Anthropologist Cal Biruk

Biruk studied Swahili and lived in Kenya for a summer during college, then worked in Malawi with demographers collecting household-level survey data in rural villages. During their dissertation research they first encountered the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), a Malawian human rights organization that promotes the health and safety of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people and other vulnerable populations by conducting participatory, community-based needs assessments to shape public policy and development aid investments. CEDEP's seeks to "contribute towards reaching zero new HIV infections, zero stigma and discrimination, zero HIV related deaths and reduction of other sexually transmitted infections among sexual minorities in Malawi" (CEDEP). Biruk has worked closely with CEDEP since.

"I've returned to Malawi almost every year since 2006 and I've witnessed pretty drastic changes. CEDEP was initially targeted by police and the government because it distributed health materials for men who have sex with men (MSM) at a time when people denied 'gay' people existed in Malawi. Today CEDEP has become a primary implementing partner for global AIDs groups and development agencies who are turning their attention to non-traditional populations, including transgender individuals, sex workers, and active drug users. Now the government of Malawi relies heavily on CEDEP for access to these communities. The very people who were reviled in political speeches, left out of health care, and not given health resources compared to the general population in terms of HIV and STI prevention are considered key populations in the work to eliminate the transmission of HIV/AIDS."

CEDEP is heavily dependent on donor funding and so Biruk often helps edit reports and write grants. One grant

from the GALA Queer Archive (GALA) led to the development of a pathbreaking publication, *Proudly Malawian: Life Stories from Lesbian and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals* (2016). "The lives of LGBTI-identified individuals living in much of Africa are often imagined to be nothing but suffering and violence," says Biruk. "There are many other dimensions to people's lives that involve joy and intimacy, love and pleasure that are sometimes obscured on the global stage and in the news media."

Key to feminist anthropology, as Biruk understands it, is reimagining traditional research strategies that relied heavily on the role of an "expert" researcher. In *Proudly Malawian*, Biruk and co-editor and collaborator Makhosazana (Khosi) Xaba replaced the expert model with a collaborative project built on a principle of self-representation through life stories, personal reflections, letters, poems, and drawings. The labor-intensive writing process included initial interviews conducted and transcribed by Biruk, followed by collaborative writing workshops, carefully designed writing exercises and reviews of drafts in progress that facilitated the authentic storytelling of the participants. "This was fundamentally a feminist endeavor, redistributing the work of producing knowledge and allowing people to engage with representations of themselves before they're put out to the world."

> *"[Our method] was fundamentally a feminist endeavor, redistributing the work of producing knowledge and allowing people to engage with representations of themselves before they're put out to the world."*

Biruk's most recent research focuses on the social life of quantitative health data commonly used for global health and development projects: How is it gathered, interpreted, and used? Volunteers or low-wage fieldworkers are trained to go household to household, often in rural areas, to interview local residents and record their responses to standardized questions on preprinted data collection forms. Fieldworkers are explicitly trained to not "cook" their data, meaning that to gather the most accurate data they should ask questions as written, record exactly what is said, and not deviate from the script.

Biruk's book, *Cooking Data: Culture and Politics in an African Research World* (2018), explicitly questions the stereotypical dichotomy often drawn between the resulting "clean" and "dirty" data." "Researchers, colonial officials, or donors for projects in Malawi were sure locals were messing up the data, cooking data, fabricating data. Instead, I saw the multiple, ingenious ways fieldworkers found to navigate very complex, sometimes awkward encounters with rural Malawian research respondents. They did their best to maintain fidelity to the research scripts they were given. But they also employed real expertise in negotiating with respondents who sometimes didn't want to answer the questions. So while researchers were preoccupied with making sure fieldworkers didn't 'cook' data by deviating from standards for survey implementation, in actuality it was the tinkering and innovations—forms of 'cooking' themselves!—in the field that, paradoxically, ensured collection of high-quality data."

Biruk suggests that attention to creative local research strategies reflects a feminist approach by highlighting the forms of often invisible labor that go into any knowledge production project. "In *Cooking Data*, I write about those field workers who often have been maligned and certainly left out of the stories of knowledge production. Global health research and work on LGBT rights would never happen without these community members, fieldworkers, and LGBTI peer educators on the ground."

of dying because of pregnancy in sub-Saharan Africa is 1 in 196, but in the developed world it is only 1 in 6,250. Young women ages fifteen to twenty-five are being infected with HIV/AIDS three times faster than men in the same age group. Women are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation. Only 25 percent of the world's parliamentarians are women (United Nations Women 2020). It is not hard to conclude from these facts that gender plays a key role in power relationships on many levels and in many arenas.

As gender studies emerged in anthropology in the 1970s, one of the first targets of research was the apparent universality of male dominance across cultures. In searching for an explanation for what appeared to be women's universally low status, anthropologist Sherri Ortner (1974) proposed the existence of a pervasive, symbolic association of women with nature and men with culture (which was more highly valued). Ortner argued that the biological functions of reproduction, breast-feeding, and child rearing associated women with nature and placed them at a consistent disadvantage in negotiating relationships of power.

At the same time, Michelle Rosaldo (1974) saw the gender roles of men and women across cultures as being split between public and private spheres. Women, constrained by their role in reproduction, were confined to the private, or domestic, sphere—including the home, family, and childbearing. Men tended to dominate the public sphere—politics, economic exchange, and religious ritual. Because wealth and social status accrued to activities in the public sphere, men gained and maintained more power, privilege, and prestige than women did. Some scholars speculated that these patterns were rooted in the human evolutionary past—a proposition we will challenge later in this chapter. Others suggested that they might derive from men's superior physical strength (see also Chodorow 1974).

As scholars looked more carefully at women's lives in particular cultures, however, the picture became even more complicated. Previous assumptions about universal male dominance, including the gendered division of labor and uniformly separate spheres of activity and power, were revealed to be historically inaccurate, overly simplistic in their reading of contemporary cultures, and prone to overlooking the specific contexts of stratification and inequality (Leacock 1981). This was true not only for women's lives but for men's as well, where wealth, power, and prestige were stratified both within and between gender groups (Quinn 1977; Rosaldo 1980).

Feminist scholars also began to revisit earlier anthropological research. Perhaps not surprisingly, these scholars discovered the significant role of women in cultures that earlier anthropologists had reported to be uniformly dominated by men. In one important reconsideration of a classic anthropological text,

Annette Weiner (1976) revisited Bronisław Malinowski's research on the Trobriand Islands (see Chapter 3), an archipelago of coral atolls just east of Papua New Guinea in the South Pacific. Malinowski (1922) had carefully detailed the Trobriand economic system, which included a local exchange of yams and the now famous (in anthropology) Kula Ring, an elaborate exchange of cowrie-shell necklaces and armbands enacted as men circulated around the chain of islands. Later anthropological literature drew extensively on Malinowski's ethnographic descriptions of the Trobriand economy and related theories of exchange.

When Weiner reexamined the economic practices of the Trobriand Islands in the 1970s with an eye to the role of gender in shaping economic activity, she found that Malinowski's research was incomplete. In *Women of Value, Men of Renown: New Perspectives in Trobriand Exchange* (1976), Weiner describes the much more complex and significant roles of Trobriand Island women in economic exchange, kinship, and ritual life. Women engaged in elaborate economic activity involving the exchange of bundles of banana leaves and banana fiber skirts as gifts made by women for other women in commemoration of individuals who had died. These exchanges were closely interconnected with the yam exchanges that Malinowski had described, but his failure to see the significance of the women's activity engendered an inaccurate view of them as inconsequential to Trobriand economic life.

MAP 7.3
Trobriand Islands

In contrast to Malinowski's earlier study (1922), why did feminist anthropologist Annette Weiner's research (1976) find Trobriand Island women engaged in significant economic activity, including the elaborate exchange of banana leaf bundles and banana fiber skirts (*left*), as well as participation in the yam harvest festival (*right*)?

The emerging anthropological scholarship of gender in the 1970s provided new tools for Weiner to overcome gender blindness and, instead, see the fullness of Trobriand culture. She wrote:

> Any study that does not include the role of women—as seen by women—as part of the way the society is structured remains only a partial study of that society. Whether women are publicly valued or privately secluded, whether they control politics, a range of economic commodities, or merely magic spells, they function within that society, not as objects, but as individuals with some measure of control. (Weiner 1976, 228)

Weiner's example and admonition resonate throughout anthropology today. Attention to the processes and implications of the construction of gender has become standard for all ethnographic research. Today, analysis of gender is not isolated to studies of women but occurs throughout the discipline in studies of all genders. Furthermore, contemporary anthropological research acknowledges that gender cannot be viewed on its own but must be examined as it intersects with dynamics of race, class, and sexuality (Di Leonardo et al. 1991). This textbook reflects such an integration, including a full chapter on gender while incorporating attention to gender in all other chapters as well.

Gender Stereotypes, Gender Ideology, and Gender Stratification

Gender studies' emphasis on the cultural construction of gender challenges anthropologists to explore the dynamics of specific cultures to understand what processes serve to construct gender in each society. Today, anthropologists are asking questions like: What are the processes that create **gender stratification**—an unequal distribution of power in which gender shapes who has access to a group's resources, opportunities, rights, and privileges? What are the gender stereotypes and gender ideologies that support a gendered system of power (Brodkin 2007)?

gender stratification: An unequal distribution of power in which gender shapes who has access to a group's resources, opportunities, rights, and privileges.

gender stereotypes: Widely held preconceived notions about the attributes of, differences between, and proper roles for men and women in a culture.

gender ideology: A set of cultural ideas, usually stereotypical, about the essential character of different genders that functions to promote and justify gender stratification.

Gender stereotypes are widely held and powerful, preconceived notions about the attributes of, differences between, and proper roles for women and men in a culture. Men, for instance, may be stereotyped as more aggressive, whereas women might be seen as more nurturing. These stereotypes create important assumptions about what men and women might expect from one another. **Gender ideology** is a set of cultural ideas—usually stereotypical—about men's and women's essential character, capabilities, and value that consciously or unconsciously promote and justify gender stratification. Gender stereotypes and ideologies vary from culture to culture, though their effects may appear similar when viewed through a global lens.

We now consider two ways in which gender ideologies have influenced thinking in U.S. culture.

The Egg and the Sperm Emily Martin (1991) has explored the ways in which cultural ideas about gender—that is, gender ideologies—have influenced how biologists have understood, described, and taught about human reproduction. In particular, Martin discusses what she calls the fairy tale of the egg and the sperm. By examining the most widely used college biology textbooks at the time of her research, Martin found that the distinct roles of eggs and sperm were described in stereotypical ways, even if those descriptions did not match up with more recent scientific findings. The sperm was frequently described as the more active of the two:

> Take the egg and sperm. It is remarkable how "femininely" the egg behaves and how "masculinely" the sperm. The egg is seen as large and passive. It does not move or journey, but passively "is transported," "is swept," or even "drifts" along the fallopian tube. In utter contrast, sperm are small, "streamlined," and invariably active. They "deliver" their genes to the egg, "activate the developmental program of the egg," and have a "velocity" that is often remarked upon. Their tails are "strong" and efficiently powered. Together with the forces of ejaculation, they can "propel the semen into the deepest recesses of the vagina." For this they need "energy," "fuel," so that with a "whiplashlike motion and strong lurches" they can "burrow through the egg coat" and "penetrate" it. (Martin 1991, 489)

As this excerpt illustrates, the textbooks that Martin studied described the aggressive sperm as being propelled by strongly beating tails, searching for the egg in competition with fellow ejaculates, and attacking and penetrating the protective barriers of the egg to fertilize the passive, waiting, receiving egg.

Yet Martin cites biology research that reveals a very different dynamic. The tail of the sperm actually beats quite weakly and does not propel the sperm forward. Instead, the tail serves only to move the head from side to side enough to keep the sperm from getting stuck on all surfaces except the egg. When the egg and the sperm do connect, the sperm is not the assertive aggressor. Rather, adhesive molecules on both create a chemical bond that keeps them attached. Then, the sperm and egg work in tandem. The sperm secretes a dissolving fluid that allows it to move toward the egg's nucleus. At the same time, the egg draws the sperm in and actually moves its own nucleus to meet the sperm and better enable fertilization. Thus, rather than displaying active and passive roles,

Are the stories you have been told about the meeting of the sperm (blue) and the egg (pink) drawn from biological research or cultural gender stereotypes?

the egg and the sperm appear to be mutually active partners in an egalitarian relationship.

According to Martin, writing in the early 1990s, images of the egg and sperm found in popular and scientific writing have commonly been based on cultural stereotypes of male and female. Moreover, the scientific language of biology has promoted these gender stereotypes. Men are considered more active, vigorous, adventurous, and important than women, who are seen as passive, receptive, nurturing, less valuable, and less significant. Martin warns that by reading stereotypical feminine and masculine behavior into our accounts of eggs and sperm, we enshrine these gender roles in nature—we make them seem natural. In turn, when this narrative becomes a common description of nature, it reinforces culturally constructed gender patterns, roles, and hierarchies. Such a process of misinformation might cause someone to believe, mistakenly: "Of course those characteristics of men and women are natural and normal—they show up at the very beginning with the behavior of the sperm and the egg!"

Man the Hunter, Woman the Gatherer Another familiar story that lies at the heart of U.S. gender ideologies is the tale of Man the Hunter, Woman the Gatherer. This fiction is frequently invoked to explain contemporary differences in gender roles by referencing the effects of human evolution. In our deep past, the story goes, human males—being larger and stronger than females—hunted to sustain themselves, their sexual partners, and their offspring (Lee and Devore 1968; Lee 2003). Hunting required aggression, inventiveness, dominant behavior, male bonding, mobility, time away from the home, and less time with offspring—all patterns that we imagine have become hardwired into the human brain or imprinted on human DNA. The ancient pleasure of killing animals supposedly shaped the human male psyche's predilection for aggression and violence and continues to drive men today. Women, in contrast, were gatherers (Dahlberg 1981). They collected fruits, seeds, and nuts and were more sedentary, home oriented, child centered, nurturing, cooperative, talkative, and passive.

This story, closely associated today with the field of evolutionary psychology, underlies much contemporary thinking about the origins and "naturalness" of gender relations. Contemporary gender roles, divisions of labor, and stratifications of power, resources, rights, and privileges are assumed to have emerged directly from physical or mental differences that developed during human evolution. So, for instance, because early human males were hunters 2 million years ago, today modern human men prefer to go off to work, compete in the marketplace, and leave child rearing and housecleaning to the women. Quite simple, really—or is it?

Ancient petroglyphs (rock carvings) discovered in the mountains north of the Saudi Arabian city of Ḥā'il appear to depict a hunting party. Were they men, as hunter-gatherer stereotypes would suggest?

Despite the popularity of this scenario in explaining contemporary male and female behavior, anthropological evidence does not support it. Yes, food foraging—hunting, scavenging, and gathering—was our ancestors' primary survival strategy for millions of years before the introduction of agriculture 10,000 years ago. Hundreds of thousands of people still live in societies where food foraging is a significant means of making a living. But no contemporary foraging societies or nonhuman primate groups display the division of labor described in the Man the Hunter, Woman the Gatherer story. In known foraging societies, women are not sedentary or passive members of the group (Stange 1997).

Though men appear to have done 70 percent of the hunting, it is not even clear that hunting was the foundational activity of early human groups. In fact, human patterns of group interaction more likely developed through the gathering and sharing of plant and seed resources. Archaeological evidence reveals that early hominid teeth were adapted to an omnivorous diet—most likely of plants, seeds, and meat, depending on what food was available in a particular season or area. Hunting would have contributed to this foundation when available, rather than the reverse. Meat may have been a part of the diet, but there is no conclusive evidence that our earliest human ancestors hunted prey themselves. Just as likely, they scavenged meat left behind by other predators (Fedigan 1986).

Anthropologists have found no evidence to prove the existence of historical patterns of male dominance, including the protection of dependent women

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THINGS

Unnecessarily Gendered Products

You've seen them. Pink and blue toothbrushes, razors, and deodorant sticks. Kids' clothes for princesses and kings. Pink nurse toy kits and blue doctor kits. Different soap fragrances. Separately colored crayon boxes for boys and girls. Accessories for Barbie and Ken. Chocolates for Mother's Day and ties and socks for Father's Day. Unnecessarily gendered products.

Women and men live surprisingly similar lives in the United States today. We grow up together, go to school together, and work in the same places. Why then are so many of the things we buy so distinctly, and unnecessarily, gendered—given masculine or feminine characteristics? What is the impact of these gendered products on how we think, what we do, and even how much money we have (Consumer Reports 2010; Wade 2015)?

1 Unnecessarily gendered products split us into two groups. They reinforce cultural ideas that men and women are distinct, even when we're not. They suggest that gender is central to how we think about ourselves and organize our lives, even when it isn't.

2 Unnecessarily gendered products reinforce stereotypes. Gendered clothes, cosmetics, exercise machines, hair, bodies, speech, and movement pressure us to conform. They marginalize those of us who don't follow gender norms, and they ignore the more fluid reality of gender performance that does not fit the stereotypes.

3 Unnecessarily gendered products help shape the gender ideology—the set of ideas—that makes gender inequality seem reasonable and rational. They explicitly tell us that women and men play different and unequal roles, that women should be subordinate to men and dependent upon them. Girls should be nurses and boys doctors (who makes more money and has more status?). Girls should be princesses and boys kings (who is in charge?).

4 Gendered packaging, descriptions, and product names promote masculine and feminine versions of the same item—shaving cream, body wash, pain reliever, antiperspirant, haircuts, shirts, shoes, bathing suits—often with higher prices for women for no apparent reason.

Gender is the culturally constructed set of ideas about how women and men should behave, think, and feel. Examining unnecessarily gendered items offers insights into the processes by which gender is constructed in U.S. culture, how gender roles are shaped, how gender ideology is created, and how gender inequality is made to seem reasonable and rational.

- Next time you go to the pharmacy, compare gendered versions of similar products. Compare for ingredients, size, and price. Try transgressing the gendered labeling and packaging to buy a product promoted for a different gender. How do you feel at the checkout counter? Why?
- Can you begin to see how something as simple as unnecessarily gendered products can affect your life choices and chances?

and children. Instead, contemporary food-foraging cultures and the archaeological record on gender roles reveal a highly flexible division of labor that enabled human groups to adapt quickly to changing conditions. In fact, a flexibility of roles rather than a clear division of labor may more properly characterize male–female relationships over human evolutionary history. Based on the evidence currently available, Man the Hunter, Woman the Gatherer—much like Martin's description of the fairy tale of the egg and the sperm—appears to be the result of a modern-day cultural myth about gender projected back onto human evolutionary history. This "history," in turn, serves to imbue contemporary gender patterns with an appearance of inevitability and "naturalness" (Fedigan 1986).

Despite the archaeological, physical, and cultural evidence that anthropologists have accumulated to debunk the Man the Hunter, Woman the Gatherer myth, it is still a daunting task to shake free of the popular idea in U.S. culture that men and women have some essential—and essentially different—nature that was shaped in our deep past. The stereotypical "boys will be boys" and "that's just a girl thing" approach to gender differences has become a powerful gender ideology, deeply ingrained in the day-to-day conversations, expectations, relationships, work patterns, pay packages, promotions, and political activities of contemporary life.

Perhaps it is simpler to believe that our genetic blueprint predetermines who we are as men and women. Perhaps this belief in the inevitability of gendered cultural patterns makes us feel better about the gender inequality structured into our cultural practices and institutions. Why try to change what is "inevitable and natural"? But if these cultural ways of thinking about gender mask gender's essential changeability, then the burden lies more heavily on the individual, the community, and the body politic to challenge patterns of power, privilege, and prestige drawn along gender lines.

Enforcing Gender Roles and Hierarchies through Violence

Normative gender roles, identities, ideologies, and hierarchies are constructed and enforced through family attitudes, peer pressure, and institutional practices in education, media, religion, and the state. But they are also policed through gender violence. The term **gender violence** denotes forms of violence shaped by the gender identities of the people involved.

gender violence: Forms of violence shaped by the gender identities of the people involved.

Globally, gender violence takes many forms. It includes verbal abuse, stalking, harassment, and any form of psychological or physical threat that evokes the fear of violence. Gender violence also includes rape, sex trafficking, dowry death, female infanticide, female genital cutting, and the battering and abuse of intimate partners and family members. (The latter is known in the United States as domestic violence.) In recent years, international attention has turned

to gender violence during wartime, particularly sexual violence and the use of rape as a weapon of war. This form of brutality has been used against both women and men (Cahn 2004; Copelon 1995).

Gender violence is not uniform around the world, undermining assumptions of innate or natural male aggression. But wherever it occurs, gender violence reveals a destructive interplay between gender and other systems of power, including sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class.

Domestic Violence Domestic violence—sometimes called intimate partner violence—is a widespread problem in U.S. culture. By this we refer to physical, sexual, or psychological harm inflicted by a current or former partner or spouse. Statistics reveal that one in three women in the United States will be abused by an intimate partner in her lifetime. Seventy-six percent of all domestic violence victims are women. Women are most often victimized by someone they know, not by a stranger. Women between the ages of twenty and twenty-four are at the greatest risk of nonfatal intimate partner violence. Intimate partner violence affects people of all ages, races, and classes, including both heterosexual and same-sex partners. (See the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence at www.ncadv.org and the Domestic Violence Resource Center at www.dvrc-or.org.)

Violence or the threat of violence serves to maintain control over others in a systematic pattern of dominance. Rather than a primordial instinctive action, domestic violence is deeply rooted in cultural patterns of violence that are passed down from generation to generation. Witnessing violence against one's parents is the strongest risk factor in transmitting violent behavior from one generation to another. Studies show that boys who witness domestic violence are twice as likely as boys who do not witness such activity to abuse their own partners or children (Straus and Gelles 1990).

Gender Violence on Campus Gender violence can occur in many contexts. For example, colleges and universities in the United States are not immune to the problems that arise at the intersection of gender, sexuality, and power. A study published by the U.S. Department of Justice reported that "young women at college face a greater risk of rape and other types of sexual assault than women in the general population or in a comparable age group" (Fisher, Cullen, and Turner 2000). In the college study, 90 percent of rapes were committed by someone the victim knew, usually a boyfriend, former boyfriend, coworker, classmate, friend, or acquaintance—a far higher percentage than in the general population. Although unwanted sexual contact and sexual threats may occur at bars, nightclubs, or work, almost all rapes and attempted rapes happen on campus. Almost 60 percent occurred in the victim's residence, 31 percent in other campus living quarters, and 10 percent in fraternities (Hirsh and Kahn 2020).

The film *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) portrayed the real-life story of Brandon Teena, a transgender man who was beaten, raped, and murdered by his male acquaintances when they discovered that he had female genitalia.

Violence against the LGBTQ Community Many gay men, lesbians, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals are targets of homophobia and violence. These types of gender violence, both verbal and physical, may serve as a form of discipline that asserts heterosexual gender norms on those who do not conform (recall the discussion of "fag discourse" earlier in this chapter). Transgender people—those whose gender identities or performance do not fit with cultural norms related to their assigned sex at birth—are particularly vulnerable (Currah, Juang, and Minter 2006), as recent debates about bathroom use have highlighted. According to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, more than half (59 percent) of respondents avoided using a public restroom in the past year because they were afraid of confrontations or other problems. Nearly one-third (32 percent) limited the amount that they ate and drank to avoid using the restroom. Respondents reported being verbally harassed (12 percent), physically attacked (1 percent), or sexually assaulted (1 percent) when accessing a restroom (James, Herman, and Rankin 2016).

Still, U.S. federal and state governments have struggled to agree on how or if to protect transgender citizens. In May 2016, the federal government issued formal guidance to public schools to allow transgender students to use bathrooms that correspond to their expressed gender rather than their biological sex. But later that year, North Carolina passed the first U.S. state law prohibiting transgender individuals from using bathrooms of their choice, a bill that has since been overturned. Many other states introduced similar legislation. By 2018, under the Trump administration, the federal government had withdrawn its protections for transgender students and was considering narrowly defining gender as a biological, immutable condition determined by genitalia at birth. The proposed change would have essentially eradicated federal recognition of the estimated 1.4 million Americans who have opted to recognize themselves as a gender other than the one they were born into, making them more vulnerable to discrimination and harassment (Green, Benner, and Pear 2018). In 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled workplace discrimination based on gender identity to be illegal, and in 2021, the Biden administration again asserted the rights of transgender students to use the bathroom that corresponds to their expressed gender.

structural gender violence: Gendered societal patterns of unequal access to wealth, power, and basic resources such as food, shelter, and health care that differentially affect women in particular.

Structural Gender Violence Anthropologists examine **structural gender violence** in addition to interpersonal forms of violence, including inequalities of wealth, power, privilege, and access to cultural resources that are stratified by gender. Poverty, hunger, and poor health affect victims' lives in violent and painful ways. The impact is often stratified along gender lines. These structural forms of gendered violence are largely invisible, rarely discussed, and too often dismissed as almost normal or inevitable (Merry 2008).

Challenging Gender Ideologies and Stratification

Women challenge and resist gender stereotypes, ideologies, inequalities, and violence directly and indirectly through creative local strategies, often building movements from the bottom up. Although lacking the global media attention or global solidarity afforded to international social movements, these local initiatives begin with women's culture-specific experiences (Abu-Lughod 2000).

Mothers of "The Disappeared" in El Salvador Between 1977 and 1992, the Central American country of El Salvador was torn by a brutal civil war. Threatened by calls for economic equality and political openness, the government unleashed military and military-related death squads in a campaign of violence and terror that targeted students, peasants, union leaders, and anyone else critical of its policies. All who expressed opposition to government policies were labeled subversive and subject to reprisal.

MAP 7.4
El Salvador

Over the course of the civil war, the military assassinated, imprisoned, tortured, raped, and "disappeared" tens of thousands of Salvadorans. One in every 100 was murdered or disappeared. The late 1970s were marked by particularly brutal campaigns. Every morning, residents of the capital city awoke to the sight of dead bodies—visibly tortured—left lying in the streets or dumped on the outskirts of town by the death squads. Many were disappeared—that is, detained and never seen again.

The grassroots women's organization CO-MADRES (The Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared, and Assassinated of El Salvador) emerged against this backdrop. The committee was one of a number of "motherist" groups across Central America in which the mothers of victims mobilized for human rights and against violence. Originally founded in 1977 by nine mothers, CO-MADRES quickly grew to include teachers, workers, students, lawyers, housewives, and shopkeepers—still mostly mothers, but with a few fathers as well. CO-MADRES became one of the first groups in El Salvador to challenge the brutal actions of the government and the military.

Initially, the women of CO-MADRES focused on demanding information from government, military, and paramilitary groups about family members who had been incarcerated, assassinated, or disappeared. The women occupied government buildings, demonstrated in public parks and plazas, and held hunger strikes to exert pressure on the state. Searching for their missing relatives, they demanded access to prisons and prisoner lists, uncovered clandestine cemeteries, and formed alliances with international human rights groups to publicize the Salvadoran government's atrocities.

As they became better organized, the women of CO-MADRES began to participate in movements for greater democratization, particularly demanding the inclusion of women at all levels of El Salvador's political decision-making

bodies. Eventually, along with other feminist movements emerging globally, CO-MADRES began to address concerns about the prevalence of gender-based violence and rape and the absence of sex education and sexual autonomy for women in El Salvador.

CO-MADRES continued to work throughout the Salvadoran civil war despite attacks on the organization and its leaders by the government and its allies. CO-MADRES offices were bombed on multiple occasions. A majority of active CO-MADRES members and all of its leaders were detained, tortured, and raped: Forty-eight were detained, five assassinated, and three disappeared. In El Salvador, rape became a common experience for the women activists of CO-MADRES and for urban and rural Salvadoran women, whether they participated in a social movement or not.

CO-MADRES activist Alicia Panameno de Garcia, in an interview with anthropologist Lynn Stephen ("LS" in the dialogue below), shared how rape had become a widely used weapon of state-sponsored torture and how psychologically difficult it was to talk about it openly, even with other women victims:

DE GARCIA: Rape was one of those things we didn't really think about. We weren't really prepared for it happening to us. We didn't think that the military would systematically be using these practices. So the first few women were detained and they were raped and because we are taught that women are supposed to be pure, they didn't talk about that. They didn't say, "They did this to me."

LS: They didn't talk about it?

DE GARCIA: Yes. But little by little we discovered it. The women started talking about it. They had to because it had consequences for their health. They needed medical assistance and when we would give people medical aid we started discovering that every one of the women had been raped. (Stephen 1995, 818)

Over time, the CO-MADRES members found that detained men were also being raped as part of their torture. The men were even more reluctant to talk about it than the women.

Eventually, CO-MADRES created a space for women to discuss their experiences publicly, to bring the sexual brutality of the military out into the open, and to talk about their fears—particularly that their husbands would abandon them. Working with other human rights organizations, the group began a process of holding the state accountable for these violations and calling into question discriminatory legal codes that provided no rights to rape victims.

The story of CO-MADRES is just one example of the determined, creative, and often risk-filled efforts that women undertake across the globe to

Mothers of "the disappeared" march in El Salvador to protest the military's practices of assassination, imprisonment, torture, rape, and "disappearance."

address gendered expressions of inequality, stratification, and violence. In an evolving response to their experiences in the midst of El Salvador's civil war, the women of CO-MADRES created a social movement that integrated traditional cultural expressions of femininity—ideas of motherhood, child rearing, and sacrifice for one's children—with direct confrontation of military death squads and government authorities as they demanded equality for women and sought to protect their families and their communities (Martin 1999; Molyneux 1999; Stephen 1995).

How Is Globalization Transforming Gender Roles and Stratification?

» Assess how globalization is reshaping gender roles and stratification in local contexts.

Beginning in the 1980s, anthropologists turned their attention to the impacts of globalization on women and gender dynamics in local economies. Flexible accumulation—relocation of the production process through both offshoring factories and outsourcing jobs—has spurred increasing migration of women from rural areas to work in urban, coastal, export-oriented factories established by foreign corporations searching for cheap labor, low taxes, and few environmental regulations. As both local and national economies have continued to

undergo rapid transitions, these women have had to negotiate between traditional gender expectations and the pressure to engage in wage labor to support themselves and their families (Mills 2003).

Impacts on Women in the Labor Force

Working women in various parts of the globe have experienced similar challenges at the volatile intersection of globalization and local realities (Fernández-Kelly et al. 1983).

Carla Freeman's *High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy* (2000) explores the gendered production processes in export factories on the Caribbean island of Barbados. Many women there work in the informatics industry: They do computer data entry of airline tickets and insurance claims, and they key in manuscripts for everything from romance novels to academic journals.

Globalization is reshaping the lives of working women as corporations search the world for cheap labor, low taxes, and fewer environmental restrictions. But are women reshaping globalization? (*Clockwise from top left*) Women labor in an automobile factory in Juarez, Mexico; an international call center in Barbados; and a pharmaceutical plant in Puerto Rico.

Instead of toiling in garment or electronics sweatshops, these women enjoy working in cool, air-conditioned, modern offices. Freeman asks whether the comfortable conditions in the data-processing factories represent an improved position in the global economy for Barbadian women or whether this new factory formation is simply another expression of women's exploitation through flexible accumulation.

Key distinctions separate the Barbadian informatics workers from those in other studies. They enjoy improved work conditions. As wives, mothers, and heads of households, rather than young, single, temporary sweatshop workers, they have won concessions from the company that include transportation, higher levels of job security, and more flexible work hours to care for their families. Freeman labels these women "pink-collar" workers because they fall between the blue-collar work done on the sweatshop factory floor and the white-collar work carried out in the higher-wage environment of the front office.

Despite the improved working conditions and social status for Barbadian women working in informatics, the company owners strive to extract maximum efficiency from them. Supervisors walk the floor and observe through glass windows to ensure continual surveillance. Managers calculate the keystrokes of each computer terminal. Wages are no higher than those of the typical sweatshop worker; in some cases, they are lower. The skills of data entry are not transferable to higher-wage clerical work. Women often need to take on additional work sewing, selling in the market, or working in beauty salons to support their families.

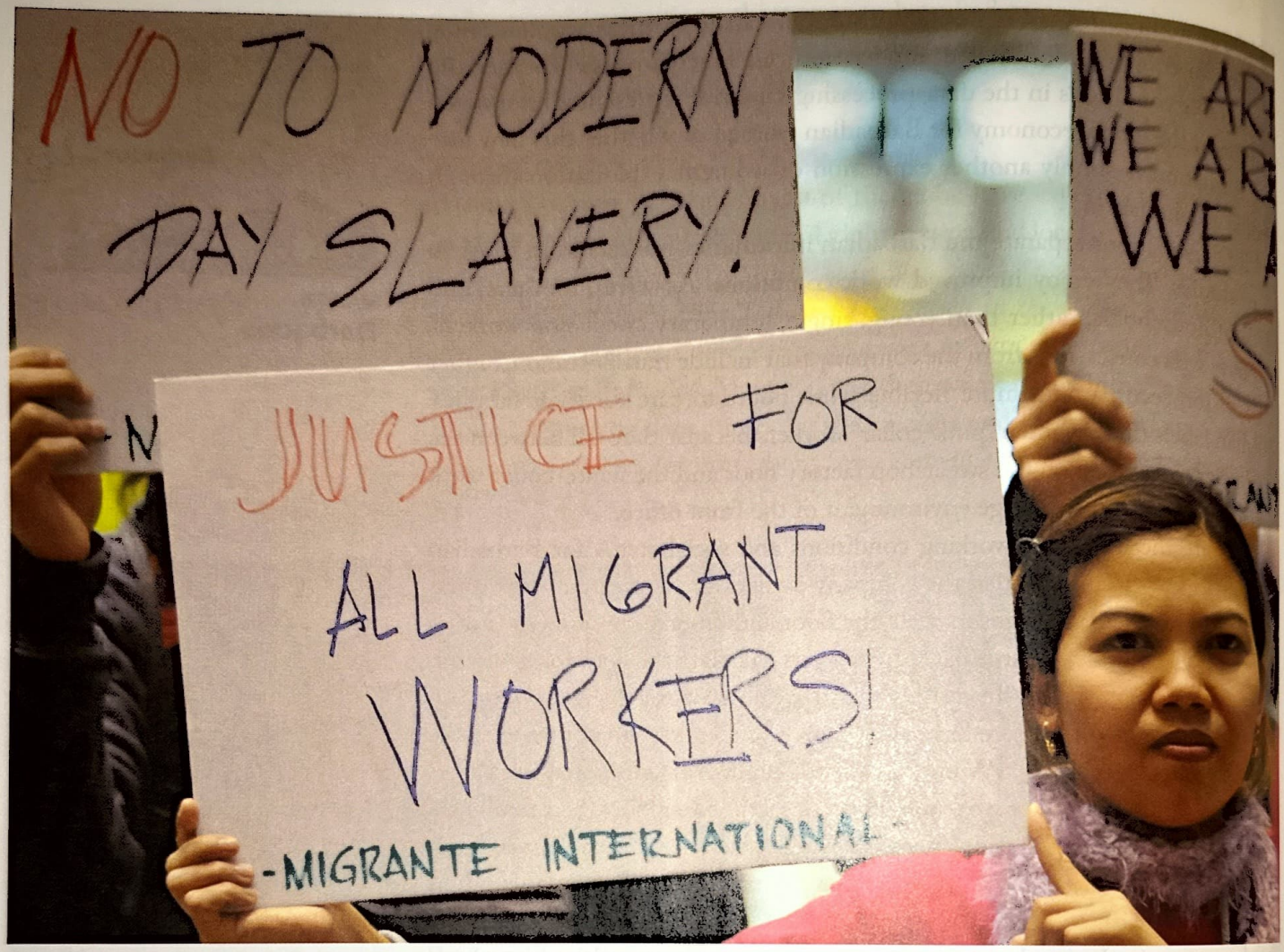
Freeman explores the ways in which the Barbadian women express their agency in the face of the informatics factory controls. These women use their status working with computers in air-conditioned offices to negotiate a different class status in the local community. They use clothing to fashion their local identities as well. Indeed, the women workers are preoccupied with fashion: They wear colorful, tailored skirt suits with jewelry, high heels, and the latest hairstyles. With their clothes, these women perform a professional and modern gender identity that enhances their local reputations and distinguishes them from other low-wage workers in garment and textile factories.

Freeman's research adds to scholarly findings that women factory workers are not simply victims of the exploitative practices of flexible accumulation. Instead, by engaging these capitalist practices directly, women assert their own desires and goals in ways that transform the interaction between the local and the global (England 2002; Richman 2001).

MAP 7.5
Barbados

Gendered Patterns of Global Migration

Globalization spurs the migration of women seeking to support themselves and their families. Women are moving as never before within and between countries in a largely invisible flow. Each year, tens of millions of women leave their homes and travel to urban areas to seek jobs in cities and export-processing



While domestic workers help professional Taiwanese women shed gender roles, conditions for these workers can often be exploitative. Here, men and women protest for domestic labor rights in Taipei, Taiwan.

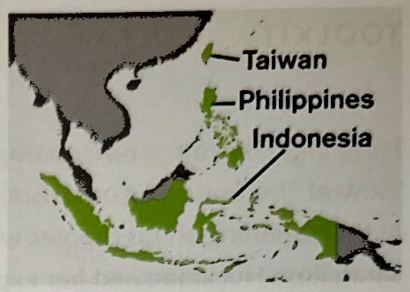
factories in their own countries. Millions more leave developing countries in search of work abroad to support their families back home.

As an alternative to finding jobs in export-processing factories, many women immigrants work as nannies, cleaning ladies, maids, or home health aides in North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. In so doing, they fill the shortage of what is known as "care work" in wealthier countries. This "global care chain" makes caregiving an international occupation in which the capacity of the world's poor—especially the world's poor women—to care is imported from the developing world to fill the expanding care deficit among the wealthy (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2004). Without these immigrant care workers, many other women would be unable to go to work themselves (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001).

Pei-Chia Lan's (2006) study of Filipino and Indonesian care workers laboring for newly rich families in Taiwan reveals the ways women—both employers

and workers, madams and maids—create new flows of global migration that destabilize traditional gendered and patriarchal roles in surprising ways.

As Taiwan's economy has expanded, first-generation Taiwanese career women, many from newly middle-class, dual-income families, have opted to meet their traditional filial and patriarchal family obligations as mother, wife, and daughter-in-law by hiring transnational migrant women domestic workers to do what was expected of their mothers in previous generations. Consuming transnational domestic labor—specifically the care work of Filipino and Indonesian women—allows them to move into the male workforce while still satisfying traditional expectations of womanhood.



MAP 7.6
Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia

In contrast, Filipino and Indonesian women convert their transnational migration and domestic labor into remittances that provide the major source of support for their families at home. In the process, they assert new status roles as primary breadwinners, though their absence—often for years at a time—severely limits their ability to fulfill the more traditional roles of mother, wife, and daughter. Lan calls these immigrant domestic workers "global Cinderellas"—women who dream of escaping poverty and finding freedom through care work abroad yet whose emancipation is built upon oppression and exploitation within their employer's home. Lan warns that even as these Cinderellas become the primary national exports of their home countries, their longed-for happy ending is often a fairy tale entrapped by the unequal power relations central to the transnational flow of care workers.

Barbara Ehrenreich (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2004) has suggested that the primary resource extracted from the world's poorer nations today is no longer oil, gold, or agricultural products. It is love. But while immigrant women care for the children and elderly of families in relatively wealthy countries, their absence creates a care deficit for their own children and elderly family members. This deficit serves to restructure the patterns of family, kinship, and care in the women's home countries (Chang 1998).

Anthropologists, whether studying gender, sexuality, kinship, race, ethnicity, religion, or any other cultural construct, seek to understand the rich diversity of human bodies and human lives, both past and present, to unlock the presuppositions that reside in mental maps of reality. As we analyze gender, we strive to unmask the structures of power that create unequal opportunities and unequal access to rights and resources along gender lines. These inequalities are far from natural, essential aspects of human life and human community. Rather, they are cultural constructs established in specific historical moments and cultural contexts. Through a careful analysis and exposure of gender as a culturally constructed system of power—not a fixed and natural pattern of human relationship—anthropologists hope to participate in opening possibilities for all humans to live to their full potential.

Thinking Like an Anthropologist: Broadening Your View of the Cultural Construction of Gender

At the beginning of this chapter, we considered the story of Sarah Rose Huckman and her experience in youth sports. How do we think anthropologically about the move in many states to ban transgender athletes from competing in sports according to their gender identity?

Nearly 8 million high school students play on a school or community sports team, comprising 57 percent of all high school students. Since the enactment of Title IX laws in the 1970s that required equal opportunity for women in federally funded organizations and activities, girls' participation in high school sports has increased from fewer than 300,000 to 3.5 million, 43 percent of all student athletes.

If you've ever watched or participated in youth sports, you know that young people have a wide range of physical characteristics and athletic abilities. That is true for transgender, cisgender, and other gender nonconforming athletes. Some fear that transgender athletes will have an unfair physical advantage and so disrupt the athletic experiences of cisgender athletes, particularly cisgender women athletes. But on a national level, we can see that transgender teen athletes are not dominating youth sports. In fact, most laws targeting transgender athletes are being passed in states where no complaints have been filed. At the international level, as of 2022 the International Olympic Committee implemented a new framework for transgender and intersex athletes. Eligibility criteria based on testosterone and requirements to undergo "medically unnecessary" procedures like hormone modification have been eliminated. Perhaps these international changes will have an impact on national and local policies in the future.

Discrimination and stereotyping mean that most gender nonconforming young people never participate in sports. For that matter, discrimination and violence make it very difficult for transgender and gender nonconforming young people to even stay in school. As many as a third drop out. Transgender youth are at elevated risk for suicide. The camaraderie and teamwork of sports often provides stability and fun for those who participate. If we acknowledge that the spate of state-level legislation targeting transgender and gender nonconforming youth athletes is not aimed at defending cisgender athletes from unfair advantage, perhaps we might instead consider these controversies as elements of a decades-long contestation in American culture over gender roles, gender identity, gender expression, and "proper" expressions of masculinity and femininity. Sports, as we have seen, is a key cultural arena in which individuals learn gender roles and in which gender is subtly and not-so-subtly taught, learned, and enforced. Perhaps these bills are more about power over particular bodies and the desire to control and define the terms of debate in this arena of rapid cultural change.

As you reflect on these issues, consider how the big questions that have organized this chapter may help you analyze the situation more deeply:

- What is gender?
- Are there more than two sexes?
- How do anthropologists explore the relationship between gender and power?
- How is globalization transforming gender roles and stratification?

Anthropologists consider gender to be a central element in every aspect of human culture, including education, the workplace, sexuality, health, family, religion, politics, sports, and individual identity formation. Throughout this chapter, we have explored how anthropologists examine the complex role of gender in crucial contemporary debates, social movements, and political struggles around the world.

Having read this chapter, are you able to take a fresh look at gender in your own life? Perhaps you can begin to see how unique cultural expectations of femininity and masculinity have shaped your ways of thinking and behaving—your interactions with family, friends, romantic interests, classmates, and coworkers. Perhaps you can see how culturally constructed notions of gender have been replicated in patterns

of inequality in cultural institutions ranging from education to the workplace. And perhaps you can imagine how stereotypes and gender ideologies like the sperm and the egg or Man the Hunter, Woman the Gatherer provide the rationale for maintaining patterns of inequality and stratification. Try to go through the next week with these tools in your anthropological toolkit and see how your view of the world, particularly the gendered world, might be transformed.

Key Terms

gender studies (p. 239)
sex (p. 240)
gender (p. 240)
sexual dimorphism (p. 240)
gender identity (p. 241)
gender expression (p. 241)
transgender (p. 241)
cisgender (p. 241)
cultural construction of gender (p. 243)
masculinity (p. 243)
femininity (p. 243)
gender performance (p. 246)
intersex (p. 250)
gender stratification (p. 260)
gender stereotypes (p. 260)
gender ideology (p. 260)
gender violence (p. 266)
structural gender violence (p. 268)

For Further Exploration

Calling the Ghosts: A Story about Rape, War and Women. 1996. Directed by Mandy Jacobson and Karmen Jelincic. Bowery Productions. Jacobson and Jelincic document the experiences of women in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.

Changing the Game. 2021. Directed by Michael Barnett. SuperFilms!, Foton Pictures, and Glanzrock Productions. Documentary about U.S. transgender youth athletes.

The Codes of Gender. 2009. Directed by Sut Jhally. Media Education Foundation. Jhally uncovers how contemporary advertising shapes masculine and feminine displays and poses in American popular culture.

Conaboy, Chelsea. 2022. "Maternal Instinct Is a Myth That Men Created." www.nytimes.com/2022/08/26/opinion/sunday/maternal-instinct-myth.html. Article about how the brain is changed by parenting.

Davis, Georgiann. 2015. *Contesting Intersex: The Dubious Diagnosis.* New York: NYU Press.

Disappearing World TV series. 1990. "The Trobriand Islanders of Papua New Guinea." Directed by David Watson; consulting anthropologist, Annette Weiner. Granada Television International.

Ehrenreich, Barbara, and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds. 2004. *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. New York: Holt Paperbacks.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierette. 2001. *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth. http://interactadvocates.org.

Intersex Society of North America. 2013. www.isna.org.

Mardistan (Macholand): Reflections on Indian Manhood. 2015. Directed by Harjant Gill. PBST and Tilotama Productions. Documentary about the pressure men face in performing gender roles in the Punjab region of India.

"Pointlessly Gendered Products." http://pointlesslygenderedproducts.tumblr.com and https://www.pinterest.com/socimages/pointlessly-gendered-products. These two blogs collect user-submitted photos of unnecessarily gendered products and advertising.

United Nations Development Program, Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 5: Gender. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/